



PEER GROUPS

A Guide to clear expectations

Engaging in a Peer Group strengthens well-being and enhances ministry effectiveness for people serving in Western Australian Baptist Churches.



Baptist Churches
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

the why

Peer Groups provide Baptist Pastors a supportive space for sharing spiritual and relational encouragement as members discuss ministry wins, challenges and areas of growth, offer encouragement and pray together.

Joining a Peer Group aims to provide deep connections with others in pastoral ministry, assisting them to lead confidently, knowing they are not alone, helping sustain spiritual and emotional health and fostering a positive impact on their churches and communities.



All Baptist Pastors, Bible College students and Ministry Leaders in pastoral roles, are invited to participate in a Peer Group. It is recommended that all Accredited Pastors and Accreditation Candidates are engaged in a Peer Group. Assistance from the Baptist Ministry Centre for group placement is available.

the who & when

Peer Groups are most effective with 4-8 members who share similar roles but offer diverse perspectives.

Options include male, female, and mixed groups, thus ensuring every pastor can find meaningful support.

Peer Groups typically meet every 6-8 weeks in person or online. Some choose to have additional retreat days and many connect at the annual Pastoral Retreat.

A group facilitator/leader is appointed to guide the use of time, the conversation and to help the group follow its self-determined ground rules and time frames.

**"Let us consider
how to stir one
another up to love
and good works,
not neglecting to
meet together..."**

Hebrews 10:24-25

Pastoral Peer Groups are similar to church connect groups, providing focused support tailored to pastors' unique needs and situations.

Hebrews 10:24-25 remains central, reminding us to encourage and uplift one another as we meet together and Proverbs 27:17 underpins our BCWA motto "Better Together!"



the how

STARTING OUT:

A group might begin as friends from college, meeting at events, be close geographically or recommended by the Baptist Ministry Centre. Alternatively, an existing group may have space for additional members.

We recommend meeting together for a meal, getting to know each other and establishing clear ground rules and expectations. You might meet a few times before confirming if this group is the right fit for you.



Each group can decide what will work best for the needs of members. This might include decisions around location (eg: geographically central or most convenient location) or hosting responsibility. You may choose to meet at a cafe, church or in homes as appropriate. Some groups also meet online, though we do encourage some in person gatherings each year.

the where

**"As iron sharpens iron,
so one person sharpens another."**

Proverbs 27:17

TIME TOGETHER

A suggested option:

the what

Arrival (15 minutes)

Give time to settle in, organise drinks/snacks and provide a quick check in with each other.

Deeper Connection (45+ mins)

Take turns to share about life and ministry with honesty and genuine authenticity. Your Peer Group ought to be a safe place to share burdens and joys with others in ministry. If there is no specific topic for the day, start with a question such as, "What's the most significant issue you've faced in life (or ministry) since we last met?" or "What has God been saying to you recently?" It is important that Peer Group members share their lives with one another, not just ministry ideas.

Equally, it is important that the group does not attempt to be a therapy group, or jump in with quick fixes, advice, or rebukes. Peer Groups are a space to listen deeply to the other person and to the Spirit of God at work. Gentle questions can help to reflect and be mutually supportive.

Prayer (15mins)

We support one another by praying for our lives and ministries. It might be appropriate to pray straight after someone has shared, or together towards the end of your time together. Additional prayer and praise points can be shared in between your gathering times.

Training / Development / Extra Support (15 mins)

A group member may share a biblical passage to reflect on or a topic can be explored together to enhance leadership skills, strengthen character or ministry practice. You may choose to have communion together or engage in another spiritual practice of significance.

Maintaining Group Life (15mins)

A small part of every meeting, and occasionally the whole meeting, should be dedicated to organising things to do together and evaluate how the group is going.

SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Your group may discuss and confirm the following considerations:

- Who is in our group? _____

- How often shall we meet? _____
- Where shall we meet? _____
- What day and time shall we meet? _____
- Who is our leader? _____
- How do we communicate with each other? _____
- Are we catering to a particular demographic/gender/how are we peers? _____
- Is our group open or closed? _____
- Are we meeting over a meal? _____
- What is our group called? _____
- In three months time, we are going to check in and review how our group is going and then review annually.
- Start Date: _____ Review Date: _____



AGREEMENT AND EXPECTATIONS:

It is important to be clear on the expectations that will maintain an environment of trust and safety for all members. We recommend the following suggestions:

Confidentiality. What is shared in the group stays in the group.

Everyone's contribution is important. I agree to participate and listen well. I agree to give and receive feedback with grace and kindness.

There are no silly questions. Let's be curious and learn together. I will allow myself to be challenged by what others have to say.

I am committed to the group. I will do my best to be present, on time, and participate each time we meet.

We respect each other's legal, physical and emotional boundaries.

Acknowledging some information we hold as pastors is not suitable to be shared.

We care for each other's wellbeing. This is demonstrated by following up with each other outside of group, helping each other practically, and supporting each other in prayer.

We don't have all the answers. If we are struggling in any area, we reach out to the Baptist Ministry Centre and seek professional support.

We want to grow in our faith. This means pursuing God personally, and encouraging each other's journeys. We may ask each other questions like:

- a. How are you going with God? How are your prayer/quiet times going?
- b. How is ministry going? Any wins/challenges?
- c. Do you have any big questions you would like to bring to the group?
- d. How have you experienced God lately?
- e. What can we give thanks for?

Keeping people safe

Confidentiality and secrecy are not the same thing. When you become aware of situations where there is risk of harm or the need for intervention,, you must speak directly the Baptist Ministry Centre.

Such instances include:

- If someone is at risk of harm or you are concerned for their welfare
- If someone has been abused
- If someone has been the victim of violence (including coercive control)
- If someone reports inappropriate conduct (past or current).

Note: In your role you may also be a Mandatory Reporter for sexual abuse.

moving on

“Goodbye isn’t forever,
it is just a pause
until we meet again.”

ENDING WELL:

To maintain healthy and intentional Peer Groups, an annual review is recommended. We understand that some groups naturally conclude as their purpose is fulfilled or circumstances change. Caring guidance assists individuals to transition into new communities that support their continued growth and wellbeing.



An individual may seek a different group to journey with, and it is perfectly acceptable to move on if another group is a better fit. It is important to maintain a spirit of grace and understanding that supports each individual as they seek the best place for healthy growth and connection.

When a group member moves on or the group completes its season, it can be a valuable time to reflect on the positive impact, celebrate shared stories and lessons and offer prayers for one another as peers move into the next season. By caring for each other and celebrating together, we foster hope, comfort and a sense of belonging that continues beyond the group itself.

**contact
info**

If you are interested in creating or joining a Baptist Ministry Peer Group, please contact the Baptist Ministry Centre.

Baptist Ministry Centre
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